Introducing the Degree of Preparedness of Post Office to Successfully Perform Succession Planning (East Azerbaijan Province)

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Background: In today’s world, there is a different approach to leadership and management needs. Since there is strong management shortage, the cost of finding and employing managers from outside the organization has skyrocketed, and there is a lack of serious, continuous, and disciplined attention to the issue of fostering future managers. Succession planning is a process where employees appropriate for high rank and key management positions of a company are selected from among eligible and talented individuals [2,5].

Objective: Key careers are the careers for which finding workforce is difficult, are rarely dependent on individuals and are highly important for ensuring the future of the organization [7].

Results: The present research attempted to investigate the degree of preparedness of the post office of East Azerbaijan Province in order to successfully perform succession planning and talent management. For that purpose, 6 main hypotheses and 1 secondary hypothesis were posed, and the information required to analyze the hypotheses were collected by using organizational deeds and information and by using questionnaires.

Conclusion: Based on the Cochran formula, 238 individuals were selected in stratified random sampling and the questionnaires were distributed among them. After collecting the questionnaires, they were analyzed using one-sample t-test. Four of the hypotheses (2, 3, 5, 6) (i.e., the stability of the organization’s CEOs, tendency to meritocracy, ratio of old and experienced managers to young, educated employees, existence of a single active, equipped ‘human resource management’ in the organization) were rejected and the rest of the hypotheses were proved. In general, by analyzing the main hypothesis of the present research one can conclude that the degree of preparedness of the post office of East Azerbaijan Province for successfully implementing succession planning programs is at a low level.

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly in the today’s variable conditions, the most basic factor determining progress and development in the society is enjoyment of knowledge, education, research activities and efficient workforce. Accordingly, the advantage of all economic, strategic and natural factors has been supplanted by the degree of enjoyment of science and technology. In other words, today successful societies are those which develop their manpower by depending on scientific and research institutions. Existence of a vacuum and employees’ desertion, especially in key careers such as management, can hinder the performance of the organization. Therefore, to prevent this problem, many organizations perform plans to obtain efficient manpower for different careers from within the organization. Succession planning is one of the programs used for employing proficient employees for key positions in the organization in case of necessity[4].

Succession planning is a process where employees appropriate for high rank and key management positions of a company are selected from among eligible and talented individuals [2,5]. Key careers are the careers for which finding workforce is difficult, are rarely dependent on individuals and are highly important for ensuring the future of the organization [7]. This process can simply be explained in a few stages. As the first step of this process, according to the planning, a general view of the organization’s need to CEOs is obtained. Afterwards, we check which of the employees can be more successful than others, in case one of the key positions is vacant. Finally, planning is conducted so that potential successors obtain the required capabilities to achieve organization’s needs [2,8].
In this endeavor, successful organizations attempt to improve their strategies and procedures such that they can absorb and develop and maintain talents necessary to continue their economic life. For this purpose, they must know what capabilities they need and then identify the potential and actual talents among their employees. In other words, they must be able to manage talents.

Some believe that lack of attention to succession plans is a destructive time bomb which will explode decade later. One of the scholars compared succession plans to life insurance, because everyone agrees about its importance and necessity, but no one thinks and acts seriously about it.

The main objective of the present research was to investigate the degree of preparedness of the post office of East Azerbaijan Province to successfully perform succession planning programs and talent management.

For this purpose, the study attempted to identify recoverable weak points in order to lay the foundation to implement a succession planning system in the post office.

1. Review of literature:
1.1. Concept of succession planning:
Management and succession planning program is a systematic endeavor conducted by an organization to ensure the continuity of management in key positions, preserving and maintaining intellectual and scientific properties with the aim of making progress and encouraging people seek promotion. Systematic succession planning is sought when an organization looks for special methods to identify, foster and preserve talented people in the long term.

Tapper (2006) believes the simplest definition for succession planning is Wolf’s definition: “systematic steps enabling one to continue another person’s path in another time and place” [11]. This definition does not determine what these steps of succession planning are; rather, it simply mentions the continuation of the activity of one person by the next person. Wolf offers a more comprehensive definition of succession planning where he refers both to continuation of leadership and to development of personnel skills. Succession planning is a defined program carried out by the organization to ensure continuation of leadership for all key positions by developing activities and measures leading to personnel skills [11]. Huang (2001) introduces a more complete definition, maintaining that people who are to assume a position are ‘skilled’ individuals who are ‘designated’. Besides, Huang considers this succession to be used to assume a ‘higher’ position in the organization’s ‘management’. “Succession planning includes designation of the most appropriate employees to assume higher management positions in companies, from among a number of skilled candidates.” [2]. This definition, too, refers to the designation of skilled individuals, but gives no information as to how and why these individuals are designated.

Wolf (1996) maintains that with the use of this definition, the main positions of the organization may be occupied by individuals who are not ready to face the challenges or are not willing to accept responsibility. In his paper, Kim (2003) holds that the major part of the literature on succession planning is focus on the management level; however, succession planning can be used for key positions at any level, even for succession at levels lower than the level where the employee keeps their current job because the downsizing of organizations sometimes makes it impossible to keep employees in their current jobs. In his definition, Raol (2005) mentions gaining results for the organization and employees’ job stability and fostering motivation in them through succession planning. “Succession planning management is a program which ensures job stability of employees. In other words, succession planning can be thought of as an attempt to plan for insuring the continuation of effective performance of an organization, section, unit, or work group by providing development, replacement, and practical use of key employees over time[12,10].”

Succession planning is a systematic endeavor on the part of the organization to ensure the continued leadership in key positions and the maintenance and development of intellectual capital for future and encouragement of personal growth. Sambrook (2005) in his paper discussed the reason for these secessions, mentioning that this program is for a certain quality and quantity of skilled managers and employees. Succession planning can be defined as an attempt to plan for an appropriate quality and quantity of managers and employees having key skills in order to cover retirement, deaths, serious diseases, promotions, or ant new position which may be considered in the future plans of the organization [9]. Kim (2003) mentions the continuity of succession planning and the three main components of the programs, i.e. identifying individuals, evaluating them, and developing them. “Succession planning is a continuous process of identification, evaluation and development of organizational leadership in a systematic way in order to improve the organization’s performance” [10]. Since it refers to the continuity of succession planning process, this description is an appropriate one. It also discussed the area of organization leadership, too [8]. In explaining the cause of extension of the subject of succession management to non-management careers, Raol (2000) maintains that since, today, in organizations, to have better performance and to encourage more cooperation in environments were decision-making is decentralized, leadership is distributed among skilled workforce, effective succession planning in non-management positions including key employees in specialized, technical, sales, clerical and production career levels may be used, too. It seems that Desller’s (2000) definition, amongst
others, is a relatively complete one, because besides provision of basic needs, it also mentions the provision of individual goals (beyond provision of job stability) in succession planning. “... the process of ensuring the existence of an appropriate supply of successors for current and future key careers, such that individuals’ career path for optimizing organization’s needs as well as individual goals and needs is managed”[12].

It seems that Dsler’s (2000) definition of succession planning is a comprehensive one, since it introduces succession planning as covering key jobs, including both current and future occupation, manages individuals’ career paths according to fulfilling the organization and the individuals’ needs. All in all, succession planning is a process of ensuring goals[5].

Management and successive planning is a process which helps to ensure job stability. The best implication of this is, perhaps, to conceive of successive planning as an attempt to ensure the continuing of the effective performance of an organization, unit, section, or a group work in order to train and substitute key staff.

2.2 The importance of management and successive planning:

CEOs and presidents are interested in management and successive planning due to many reasons:

One: they believe in the fact that maintenance of an organization is dependent on appropriate staff in a proper time. Strategic success in an organization is a factor of having a sophisticated leader. Leaving succession to fortune and remaining hopeful to find sophisticated successors, as they are needed inside or outside an organization (with little information about them), might be once, but not always, effective. Attempts need to be made on the part of an organization so as to ensure that talented and intelligent candidate would be chosen for key jobs.

Two: As attempts to down-sizing organization and other re-expense policies lead to reduction of middle management levels (grounds of traditional instruction and talent sources for financial management), less staff to be promoted to higher management would remain inside the organization. That is, more attempts are required to be made to identify successful candidates and to instruct them scientifically. Retention of those who have both salient performances and salient talent in leadership positions must not be thought a certain matter, especially in the current market in which talented staff, due to their abilities, can work in other companies. This is because policy of making organization down-sizing reduces their chance.

Worse than all is differences in the effects of down-sizing on group members, since jobs would distribute due to the fact that salient staff would have burdensome jobs to do with the same salary. Therefore, they would feel dissatisfied with low salaries of their co-workers and leave the company. To avoid this problem (which can be a disaster to the leader of the organization), CEOs need to take effective measures such as offering job promotion and giving rewards to increase their cooperation.

Three: if management and planning is not systematic and predicted, managers tend to identify and nominate those who have experiences apparently the same as themselves. In this sense, they create bureaucratic systems which are based on favoritism.

As explained by Rozabeth Mas Kanter, favoritism becomes very important for them due to managers’ position and situation in the company’s structure.

In fact, management and successive planning form the basis of following notions: notifying every individual’s career path; creating educational projects; creating individuals’ career paths and movements; notifying vertical and horizontal displacement of management structure, and creating a more comprehensive system for human planning.

Generally speaking, similar reasons have been elaborated by many authors in justifying the reasons for introduction and development of succession planning. Bisan (1998) asserts that fewer number of organizational levels and basic changes of organizational structure of the companies lead to a difficulty in setting developmental positions for individuals with high potentials. Ross Well (2000) believes that we need to make clear to talented individuals what their career paths are, because due to competitiveness, talented individuals might be attracted by a competitor organization, if they see no improvement in the present organization[11].

Taylor and Mcgregor (2004) think that job quitting is a phenomenon which makes staff to need to remaining and improving job from human sources. Successful succession can reduce job quitting [8]. since staff with job prospect would rarely think about quitting. In this respect, Ross Well (2000) states that, in one hand, chances of job promotion can be encouraging and motivating, while on the other hand, promoted staff can make other staff hopeful when promotion process is fair. He, again, propose that nowadays faithfulness between the managers and the staff has decreased; neither managers make long-term contracts nor staff think they can constantly provide service in an organization. In this way, he thinks that succession planning gaining importance increasingly as it plans to expand and retain humans[11].

Chartrand notes that maintaining an organization is a factor of following succession planning. In addition, he suggests that introducing diversity into job milieu and increasing capacity in the organization are result of executing succession planning.

3.2. Principal models of succession planning and management:

Different principal models of succession planning and management are as follows:
The present study seeks to identify the requirements and influential factors of implementing succession and talent management and some points are ignored. Seven-pointed star is explained in summary.

2.1.8.1 Seven-pointed star model:
As the name speaks for itself, this model is comprised of seven steps:

Step 1: commitment:
In this step, decision-makers of the organization need to be committed to management and successive planning in order to make it settled. To some extent, this indicates quick growth of beliefs and believing in increased value of planned approaches in management and successive planning, other than unplanned approaches.

Step 2: evaluation of the current job:
In this step, decision-makers need to evaluate requirements of the current job in key positions. One can make people prepared for job promotion only based on a method which is constantly dependent on job requirements. In this step, decision-makers must make it clear where exactly key positions of management are and make use of one or a number of approaches to set the requirements.

Step 3: evaluation of individuals’ procedure:
How exact people are in doing their current job. The answer is critical because general assumption is that, in most management and succession plans, people need to do their best in order to get a job promotion. As a part of this step, the organizations need to make a list of talents to recognize what amount of human resource is available.

Step 4: evaluation of future job:
What are job requirements in key management positions in the future? To answer this question, decision-makers need to make attempts to evaluate requirements of a future job. This evaluation can help future leaders to confront with requirement modifications.

Step 5: evaluation of the individual’s future talents:
In getting promotion, how accurate people must be? What talents do they have and how accurate they are in complying them with requirement of a future job? To answer these questions, the organization needs to make a process to evaluate individuals’ talents. This futuristic process must not be mistaken with staff’s past or current evaluation of performance.

Step 6: filling training vacuum:
How can the organization, relying on external instruments, train staff in order to ignore the need for successive management and planning? It needs to set constant programs to instruct staff inside the organization for future managers. Further, decision-makers have to provide successors for traditional methods of promotion so as to come up with answers for succession needs.

Step 7: evaluation of successive planning:
For improvement, management and planning ideas need to be constantly evaluated. Also, results of such evaluation must be regularly used to maintain commitment and improvement of systematic successive management and planning.

2.4 Succession and management of human resource:
In his book, Desler (2000) introduces human resource management as a process of setting programs for filling empty future occupations according to an analysis of positions presumed to become empty[5]. He states that making decisions about whether these positions are to be filled from inside or outside the organization is a component of such program. In this viewpoint, Desler views successive planning as candidates’ prediction of the organization critical positions inside or outside. However, through the literature, this term has been applied to mean filling of critical positions from inside the organization.
Fig. 2.1.1: seven-pointed model of systematic successive planning.


2.5 Factors influencing success of succession:
Ross Well (2005) introduces 15 characteristics of a successful succession plan as follows: sustaining CEOs, optimization, focus of concentration, responsibility, covering all levels[11], systematic approach, a comparison of current performance and potential future performance, identification of current requirements for the succession of CEOs, force to identify and train successor, creating specific developmental programs, work as expansion, comprehensive developmental programs, encouraging critical questions through developmental programs, shifting focus of succession planning to capabilities over a higher level, and focusing on official couching.

There are two indices in evaluating the degree of success of a succession planning; individual indices, which evaluates an individual’s function after being appointed in a management jobs and thus compares it with the predicted quality, and general indices that evaluates the number of appropriate management jobs that have been completed by the inner staff of an organization.

Eastman (1995), too, emphasizes on the following factors as important ones for succession planning:
- Should have evident support from the side of CEO and senior managers
- Should be in control of and under property of the line managers with the support of administrators staff
- Should be simple and should be in accordance with the Organizations needs
- Should be flexible and should be related to the work plan and he organization’s strategy
- Should have been developed through studies of human resources
- Should be based on the developed and objective capabilities of the candidates
- Should consider the employees’ input
- Should be part of an overall development plan of the managers
- Should include business development programs
- Should be associated with other human resource systems
- Should put emphasis on accountability and follow-up

2.6 The research conceptual model:
In this study, in order to investigate the factors affecting the readiness of the post office establishment for placing the succession planning for directors, the following dimensions are used for indexation of the research:
1. Continuous support and guidance of senior managers
2. The number and proportion (percentage) of the seasoned and aging managers along with the number and proportion (percentage) of the young and educated professionals seeking growth
3. Consistency of the senior management team
4. Serious tendency of the organization in meritocracy
5. Clear strategies and strategic objectives of the organization
6. Existence of a unit of an active and equipped “human resources management”

In order to deploy this process correctly, there always have been obstacles and challenges. Lack of meritocracy, too much attention to the level of educational degrees, centralized management, administrative bureaucracy, instability in managerial occupations, rely on short-term objectives and the quantity, traditional management practices, lack of attention to research, lack of law enforcement, indifferences towards the managers performance, and so forth, are the important challenges in the placing of this process in organizations. In order to remove these obstacles, we must primarily be prepared to meet these challenges and deploy cultural, psychological, legal and IT infrastructures.
3. Methodology:
To gather information on the subject of theoretical and research literature, there have been used library resources, articles, books and Internet. Likert scale is used in the questionnaire that is of five options, starting from “too little” and ending in “too often”.

For test reliability, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients are used. Once the questionnaires are randomly distributed among 30 employees, then the collected data was tested and was reconfirmed with Cronbach’s alpha reliability, that the Cronbach’s alpha of the questionnaire, which consisting of 32 questions, was calculated to 0.879.

Table 2: the values of Cronbach’s alpha.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.879</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to analyze the collected data from the questionnaires, descriptive and inferential statistical methods are used. Thus, to describe the given responses to the survey questionnaire, the frequency distribution tables and percentages of responses to each question were used. And to illustrate some of the statistical data visually, the histograms were used; and in the level of inferential statistics to the test, the hypotheses of the research used one-sample t test.

The research population is all the employees of the post office in East Azerbaijan province, a total of 624 people. Cochrane methodology was used to calculate the sample size, and accordingly, the maximum sample size was estimated as 238 people; that the sample size for stratified random sampling method has been chosen from among the employees of the post office in East Azerbaijan Province

\[ n = \frac{Nt^2pq}{Nt^2 + t^2pq} = \frac{624 \times (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{624 \times (0.05)^2 (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5} = 238 \]

4. Findings:
Hypothesis 1: Continued support and guidance to senior management on succession planning programs at the post office is effective.
Hypothesis 2: The proportion of skilled and aging managers compared to young and educated staff has impacts on facilitating the implementation of succession planning at the post office.
Hypothesis 3: Stability of a senior management team to run a successful succession planning program has impacts on the post office.
Hypothesis 4: Deploying a serious attitude towards meritocracy and proper selection of the successful implementation of the succession plan has effect on the post office.
Hypothesis 5: Clear and successful implementation of strategies and strategic objectives of the Post Office has an effect on succession planning program in the post office.
Hypothesis 6: Existence of an active and equipped unit of "Human Resource Management" in the organization has impacts on the successful implementation of succession planning programs at the post office.

Table 3: The results of the test of research hypotheses, using descriptive and inferential statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>The mean difference</th>
<th>t Quantity</th>
<th>Significant level</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 1</td>
<td>3/02</td>
<td>0/648</td>
<td>0/02</td>
<td>3/199</td>
<td>0/037</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 2</td>
<td>2/96</td>
<td>0/995</td>
<td>-0/0378</td>
<td>-0/586</td>
<td>0/558</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>Disproved</td>
<td>Disproved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 3</td>
<td>2/66</td>
<td>0/974</td>
<td>-0/334</td>
<td>-5/287</td>
<td>0/000</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 4</td>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>0/556</td>
<td>0/168</td>
<td>4/683</td>
<td>0/000</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 5</td>
<td>2/88</td>
<td>0/69</td>
<td>/119.0</td>
<td>-2/67</td>
<td>0/008</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 6</td>
<td>2/57</td>
<td>0/819</td>
<td>-0/420</td>
<td>-7/914</td>
<td>0/000</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>Disproved</td>
<td>Disproved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General hypothesis: the readiness of post office in East Azerbaijan Province to implement a successful succession planning program is desirable.
H1: Readiness of the post office in East Azerbaijan Province in order to implement a successful succession planning program is desirable (\( \mu = 3 \)).
H2: Readiness of the post office in East Azerbaijan Province in order to implement a successful succession planning program is NOT desirable
Table 4-2-8: Testing the general theory research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t Quantity</th>
<th>Significant level</th>
<th>The mean difference</th>
<th>CI of mean difference</th>
<th>Mean hypothetical</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readiness</td>
<td>2/94</td>
<td>0/483</td>
<td>-1/849</td>
<td>0/066</td>
<td>0/0578</td>
<td>0/004 /119</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results of Table (4-2-8), it can be deduced that by calculating the mean difference -0/0578 the obtained level of significance (066/0), the readiness of the Post Office in East Azerbaijan Province for successful implementation of the succession planning is not desirable. That is, the H1 is disapproved and H0 is confirmed.

5. Conclusions and recommendations:

Based on the results of the hypothesis, it can be concluded that the readiness of the post office of East Azerbaijan Province in implementing successfully the succession planning is still in low levels, and generally, all the background and context for the successful implementation of succession planning at the post office are not available or are too weak.

Following are the recommendations elicited from the obtained results of the research, aiming at improving the weaknesses and further enhancing the strengths in preparing the needed grounds for successful implementation of succession planning at the post office of East Azerbaijan Province.

1. Ongoing support and guidance of senior managers; according to the results of the study showed that the opinions and viewpoints of employees, not enough support is given to the succession planning, though this program is considered as a facilitator. On the other hand, in literature review, it was elaborated that the support and guidance of the senior managers of the organization's succession planning is the success of organizations in implementing this program; therefore, they should take the necessary measures for the realization of this work and also to develop their confidence and trust in the staff so as to have their views and attitudes corrected. The organization can make appointments based on merit so as to provide confidence and mindset in staff, and by so doing, improve collaborations among the employees and thus enhance the process of succession planning.

2. The organization can grant scholarship to those volunteer employees who want to study in stock exchange related fields.

3. They can make contracts with prestigious institutions and training centers to provide training for their employees.

4. The Principle leader in succession planning is an organization's human resources department; therefore, it is essential that the human resource department by supporting the senior managers pay special attention to developing the capabilities of their employees; because, the success of an organization mainly depends on efficient human resources and specialists, and such assets can create competitive advantage in business. Hence, the unit of human resources can pay special attention to development of the managers and the employees’ capabilities, and, too, take necessary measures to equip the managers and figure out potentialities in the employees.

5. Prepare educational programs such as mentoring and monitoring.

6. Forming a unit called “Growing Leaders” within the field of human resources in order to train the managers and to up-to-date their information and skills.

7. Administration of human resource development programs through practical training of the human resources that is commensurate with their posts.

REFERENCES


